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ABSTRACT

Intended to aid fellow department chairpersons in developing adequate library resources and to suggest ways of motivating departments in their use, this paper proffers suggestions based on the author's experience as a librarian and academic department chairman. It is suggested that (1) guidelines established by the library profession and accrediting agencies can be useful in establishing standards for the acquisition of materials for curriculum collections; (2) available selection aids include book reviews, publishers' advertisements, author reputations, and the professional judgment of the chairperson augmented by opinions of the library staff or faculty committee; (3) central library collections appear to offer more advantages for faculty than department libraries; (4) the chairperson should encourage and develop faculty and student usage of library resources; and (5) graduate trained librarians can assist the chairperson by acting as information brokers between the collections and the department through library instruction and workshops, or through course related or subject specific library instruction directly connected with the department curriculum. The chairperson is encouraged to initiate such activities as a means of enhancing the quality of departmental instruction.
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A PRIMER ON EFFECTIVE LIBRARY UTILIZATION FOR
DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSONS

by

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A PRIMER ON EFFECTIVE LIBRARY UTILIZATION FOR DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSONS

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The central position which libraries have played throughout the course of history is a matter of record. One need only briefly recall the importance of the Alexandrian Library, the libraries of Plato and Socrates, or the monastic libraries of medieval Europe to visualize the significant role which libraries have played in the history of education in general. Within the field of higher education, the role of libraries was, if anything, more central to the development of institutions of higher learning than other libraries were to the development of civilization. Certainly the early medieval universities of Salerno, Bologna or Paris would not have achieved eminence had it not been for the caliber of the faculty and the libraries which played an integral part in the instructional program.

In the United States the importance of libraries to the development of higher education was even more critical. Indeed, had it not been for the availability of books to form the foundation of all Colonial American colleges, higher education would have been, at best, hampered and, at worst, non-existent. The obvious illustration is, of course, the founding of Harvard College in 1636. This world-renowned institution was named after John Harvard who donated his personal library of 300 volumes to the college-- a gift of such magnitude that the entire college was named in his honor! Today, such an honor would cost the serious benefactor several millions of dollars. Yet John Harvard's entire library was only 300 volumes, a

collection undoubtedly equalled by the number of books most of us have in our offices or homes. A similar example would be that of Elihu Yale who donated his library of 250 volumes to the institution which bears his name. In fact, such was the importance of the collegiate library, that every college begun in the United States prior to the American Revolution began with donations of books. This library heritage is so ingrained in the fiber of higher education that it would be unthinkable for a college or university of today to exist without a library. This is true not only in the United States but throughout the world.

While academic libraries are clearly vital within the philosophical and historical context of higher education, how do they relate to the educational process on a day to day basis and of what importance are they to the basic organizational and instructional component of higher education, the academic department? Assuming that libraries are vital to the academic department, what role does the basic organizational and instructional leader, the department chairperson, play in developing and utilizing library collections? This paper will attempt to explore, in a practical way, the answers to these questions.

I think all of us involved in higher education would agree that the quality of an academic department is determined by the quality of that department's faculty. Nevertheless, while there is a vast amount of knowledge, insight and expertise in any given department's faculty, it is unrealistic to think that all knowledge pertaining to that discipline is represented. This is particularly true in small departments, of which there are a large number. The obvious concomitant of a quality faculty is the presence of a quality collection of library materials representing the discipline, i.e., books, periodicals, films, filmstrips, recordings, video

tapes, etc. Indeed it would seem that the two are interdependent and cannot exist without each other. Or, to say it more explicitly, a quality faculty cannot exist without a quality library and a quality library cannot exist without a quality faculty to develop it.

Certainly the faculty depend upon the library to support their various research endeavors, whether course-related or otherwise. Likewise, the faculty depend upon the library to support the curriculum in general, individual courses, and course assignments required of students. From a different, but obviously related perspective, students also depend upon the library to support their attempts to complete course assignments. In addition, if we take into consideration the current educational popularity of individualized instruction, contract learning, independent study, life-long learning, etc., I can think of no more logical or appropriate place for these to occur than in a library--a function which libraries have served for thousands of years. Given the importance of the academic library to the process of higher education in general, and specifically to the academic department, it would appear that library resources are of significant importance to the maintenance of a quality academic program that further attention to the development and utilization of library resources is warranted.

The Department Budget And Other Quantitative Standards

The most direct way of building a quality library collection within a department's field of study is through a sound program of selection and acquisition of library materials in both print and non-print formats. To acquire the necessary library materials takes money in ever-increasing quantities due to the rise in costs, particularly of journals, over the last several years. What is necessary is, of course, a determination to be made by each department based upon the strengths or weaknesses of the existing collection. While the strength of a library collection, expressed

in quantitative terms, is not necessarily an expression of quality, it is the only available guideline currently in practice. Such quantitative guidelines are readily available in most academic libraries in the form of "Standards for College Libraries" established by the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association. These "Standards..." suggest such guidelines as the number of basic volumes in the general collection, number of volumes per FTE Faculty Member, number of volumes per FTE Student, number of volumes per undergraduate field, and number of volumes per various degree categories (Association of College and Research Libraries. "Standards", p. 279). A similar set of criteria was established independently by Clapp and Jordan (1965) and which included such considerations as the student body, the faculty, the curriculum, methods of instruction, availability of suitable places for study, geographical proximity to other libraries, and the intellectual climate of the institution (p. 373). Since higher education's experience with non-print materials is limited, guidelines for these materials have not yet been developed. Interestingly enough, the "Standards...", the Clapp and Jordan study, and the various accrediting bodies mentioned below, all support the concept of "adequate" non-print materials to support the curriculum, but do not outline any specific quantities.

In addition to the above guidelines established by the library profession there are, of course, guidelines put forth by the six regional accrediting agencies (non-quantitative), guidelines established by the various disciplinary accrediting bodies, and guidelines mandated by state education agencies. While all of this appears to be a morass of bureaucratic detail it does, nevertheless, underscore the importance of and dependence upon an adequate library collection. The easiest path through this maze of standards

is to simply select those guidelines which are the most stringent and develop the collection in that way. Since most of the guidelines support and complement each other, if the most stringent ones are satisfied, you can generally satisfy them all and at the same time build a strong library collection.

Taking into account the quantitative standards for library collections, the chairperson can determine the strengths or weakness of the collection and thereby plan the library portion of the departmental budget request. Naturally, the weaker the collection the greater the funds needed to bring the collection up to the recommended guidelines. Using the average price per book in a particular field and then multiplying this by the number of books needed will give a reasonable dollar amount for books. Periodical subscription costs are available from the publications themselves. Of course one would have to take into consideration the annual percentage of price increases which books and periodicals have experienced in the last several years and incorporate this percentage of inflation into the book budget. In order to arrive at accurate costs per book, number of books published per year, and other very useful book publishing information, the reader is referred to the Bowker Annual.

If the present collection is adequate to meet the quantitative recommendations of the various standards, then generally less money will be needed to keep the library collection current. In this situation, the chairperson would need to know the average number of books published per year in that particular discipline and the average cost per book. Again, by multiplying the two together, the chairperson can get an approximation of how much all books published in that disciplinary area will cost. In all but a very few institutions it would not be possible to purchase all the books published in any given year and an estimate of what percentage

to purchase would have to made e.g., 5 percent, 50 percent, etc. Again, the Bowker Annual would provide essential information on number of books published, etc.

Selection of Library Materials

Given the problems of increasing costs of library materials, the question of proper selection of library materials assumes added and significant importance. What, then, is the best way to select library materials so that one can make the best use of limited funds? One suggestion is not to rely on publishers' advertisements. While these are frequently the first notice of a particular item, they are also distributed by the company who will derive the most benefit from its purchase. Therefore, we need to avail ourselves of unbiased, third parties, i.e. book reviewers. A large percentage of professional journals have, as part of their usual format, a well done book review section and every academician is aware of those in his particular discipline. In addition, there are several independent sources, the most comprehensive of which is Choice--a periodical whose prime purpose is to review books for college libraries. As with all types of reviews, book reviews are the professional opinions of one or two individuals. Therefore, the individual needs of your collection and your professional judgement must be used.

Unfortunately, a great many worthwhile books are never reviewed. In such instances you will need to rely upon the publisher's advertisement. The following criteria will, therefore, prove useful in your evaluation of book and non-book materials: the qualifications of the author; the reputation of the publisher; the coverage of the particular book and its relationship to the present collection; the style in which the book is written; and then, hope for the best! Book selection is not a science,

particularly when you don't have the book in front of you to read and evaluate. In the final analysis, the professional judgement of the individual selecting the books must come into play. After all, what is one person's junk is another person's treasure.

This brings us to the question of who makes the selection of library materials. It could be that each faculty member orders library materials independently until departmental funds are exhausted. This is a rather poor approach to intelligent development of the library collection. What generally happens is that a few faculty will order heavily in their areas of interest while others will order very little, if anything. This provides for an unbalanced representation of concepts from throughout the discipline. It also creates problems in adequate budgetary control for the chairperson. Another alternative is to have the professional library staff select all library materials. Unless there are subject area specialists on the library faculty and unless there is total communication between the department in matters of what is taught and how it is taught, this is not a particularly good approach either. My recommendation is for a combination of the two approaches outlined above. That is to say, that the academic department should have immediate control over what library materials are chosen to support its curriculum. Close cooperation with library faculty in regard to coordination with other departments who might order similar kinds of materials, where to obtain the best price, from whom to order, how to obtain out of print materials, suggesting titles for purchase, etc. is absolutely necessary. Within the academic department selections can be made either by a representative committee or the department chairperson. Although time-consuming, the faculty committee remains the best guarantee for a representative collection. Appointments to this important committee should receive the chairperson's careful consideration.

In addition, the chairperson should devote attention to providing adequate motivation for the committee members in order to insure the task gets the careful attention it deserves.

Centralization or Decentralization

The reader will no doubt have noticed that at no time throughout this paper have I made mention of a departmental library collection. In fact, the underlying assumption has been that the institution has a centralized library system. This exclusion has been deliberate since much of what has been covered thus far would be applicable in either case. However, a word or two about department libraries seems to be appropriate at this point. While I can understand the rationale that department libraries place materials at the finger tips of faculty and students, thereby eliminating unnecessary and time-consuming walks across campus, I don't believe this is sound thinking. It has been my experience that most departmental "libraries" are not worthy of the accolade. Indeed, most departmental libraries which this author has seen are not under the supervision of a professional librarian (or anyone else for that matter); are either not organized or very poorly organized; information is difficult to locate; and there are no records of who has borrowed what items. This creates a learning environment which is totally inadequate and directly opposed to the rationale for its existence.

On the other hand, a central library facility has the benefits of librarians trained at organizing, cataloging, retrieving and disseminating information. In addition, the central library has the benefit of bringing together materials from a variety of related disciplines and thus enabling cross-fertilization between disciplines to occur. Finally a centralized library provides the opportunity to escape one's office and enjoy some

fresh air, and perhaps perspectives, while walking across campus. The advantages of a centralized library collection far outweigh those of a departmental library and I would recommend that, whenever possible, a centralized approach be followed.

Having briefly examined the importance of an academic library, the establishment of budgetary guidelines and the selection of library materials, we have covered all aspects of having materials available for use. Now we shall turn our attention to the even more important questions concerning how to maximize the use of these materials. The department chairperson plays a very important and crucial role in this area.

Utilization of Library Collections

In order to best utilize library materials, faculty need to know what is available and be continually kept up to date. There is really no easy way to know what is presently in the collection other than browsing through the card catalog or the library stacks. Browsing is best done on an individual basis. While this method is time-consuming, it is also very rewarding. It is, rather, in the area of new acquisitions that the chairperson can be most influential. It will be to the chairperson that the department's book order slips (or other form of notification) will be sent and the chairperson can see that they are disseminated in such a way that faculty members and students can see what has been added to the collection. Perhaps, a departmental list of new books could be distributed monthly, a frequently revised display of new book jackets could be put on a bulletin board, shelves could be set aside in the library or within the department for examination of new books, round table discussions of new books could be organized, or a forum for departmental book reviewing provided. These ideas and others could certainly be initiated by the chairperson and could

serve the dual purpose of acquainting students and faculty members with new books and fomenting dialogue, discussion and interaction.

The department chairperson can also effectively utilize library resources as an integral component of faculty development programs. Since the chairperson plays such a critical role in any attempts at faculty development (Jennerich, 1978), this is an important and frequently overlooked area which deserves further attention. A large amount of effort concerning faculty development has centered around two approaches: the use of "experts", imported to a particular institution; or, sending institutional members to conferences, workshops etc. While I see nothing inherently wrong with these approaches they are, nevertheless, not the only approaches. Conference attendance or consultants only provides exposure to one or two "experts" while a library provides exposure to literally hundreds of "experts" already present and paid for. What I am suggesting is that perhaps we don't need to rush off and join the bandwagon for national faculty development programs without first exploring and utilizing the resources that are already available on our own campuses and in our own libraries.

If we are assuming that the underlying basis for faculty development involves the improvement of the teaching-learning process and keeping up to date in one's field, then I strongly believe that libraries have much to offer. Certainly there is a tremendous amount of information available, all one need do is retrieve it. The chairperson, here again, plays a significant role since he/she is the spokesman for and representative of the department. The chairperson is the logical choice and hopefully will be the initiator of attempts to enlighten faculty regarding information retrieval. Certainly the chairperson can organize and encourage attendance

at departmental seminars concerning on-line and off-line computer searches available through library networks and data bases; through refresher programs on new bibliographic sources, periodical indexes or card catalog innovations; by arranging for demonstrations explaining inter-library loan resources and reserve collection procedures, particularly with regard to the new copyright law; arranging workshops concerned with use of educational media, including machines (hardware) as well as materials (software); discussing methodologies of incorporating library-related teaching strategies into individual courses, or; exploring ways of incorporating library instruction programs with course related assignments. With the information explosion of recent years, it has become impossible for any of us to be constantly aware of what is available in our respective disciplines. While it may have been a realistic goal to read all of Harvard's original library of 300 volumes in a matter of a few years, that goal today would be totally unrealistic for one's academic discipline or even area of interest. Therefore, selectivity and retrieval of information has become vitally important and the only way that this can be done effectively is through the intelligent use of libraries and librarians. Certainly these components of faculty development need to be explored further.

Librarians As Information Brokers

Today's librarians are markedly different from their counterparts of fifteen or even twenty years ago. While it is true librarianship has suffered from an image problem (the little old lady with the tennis shoes and a bun), this image is no more correct than other stereotypes. Today's librarians are highly trained, highly skilled professionals whose graduate training involves an understanding of the complexities of retrieving information, as well as proper utilization of computer science and

instructional technology. In addition to their graduate degree in librarianship, many have a second graduate degree in a traditional discipline. They are, in effect, "Information Brokers", the link between the morass of information on one hand and an individual seeking information on the other hand. However, in the academic caste system, librarians are often regarded as inferior despite the American Association of University Professors and American Library Association "Joint Statement on Faculty Status of College and University Librarians" adopted in 1973 (p. 52). This is unfortunate and is often a stumbling block in the quest for information. Therefore, the place to begin our concluding section is with establishing effective working relationships with library faculty.

While effective interpersonal relationships are essentially personal in nature, the department chairperson, often by example, can directly influence working relationships between department and library faculty. This influence is perhaps most apparent with faculty new to the department and who are most impressionable regarding their new surroundings. The best advice I can offer is to treat librarians with an attitude of professional respect due to one's colleagues and not with a superior or condescending attitude. A professional approach will certainly facilitate any interaction between departmental faculty and library faculty and make for a generally satisfactory working relationship.

Librarians can provide a variety of services to individual faculty members and, with the cooperation of the chairperson, to the entire department and its instructional programs. Workshops on various new library innovations, as described earlier, are easily arranged. It is, however, in the area of course-related instruction that the potential for the longest lasting effects are most apparent. Research has clearly shown that students

learn more about library tools and library usage when the instruction is related to specific course assignments. This instruction is best worked out in advance between the instructor and the librarian and close cooperation to achieve class objectives is essential. This instruction most certainly should occur during a student's first semester in college. In addition, library instruction has also been shown to be extremely beneficial when reinforced at the time a student enters his major field of study. Here again, the chairperson can be instrumental in seeing that this type of instruction is incorporated into the department's curriculum. Instruction of this nature has also proved beneficial for undergraduates, graduate students, and even faculty.

In addition to course-related library instruction, discussions on the practical use of library resources for faculty and students will certainly be of aid to the faculty and greatly enhance librarians' ability to assist library users. For example, giving the library sufficient advance notice of what will be required on a reserve reading list so that sufficient copies, if not available, can be ordered; not ordering multiple copies of a book to be used only for one semester; not assigning entire classes the same term paper topic, and; providing students with proper bibliographic information on all reading lists or assignments are a few hints that come immediately to mind.

The range of services provided by libraries and librarians are many and varied and the surface has only been scratched in the above discussion. The initiative, however, generally must come from the department and the department chairperson in particular. All the chairperson need do is ask a member of the library faculty for assistance and he/she will direct you

to the proper individual to answer your particular request. There is certainly no harm in asking for assistance and you will be pleasantly surprised by the results.

The vital part which libraries play in the instructional process has, perhaps, never really been doubted by the reader. Yet all too frequently libraries are overlooked and taken for granted. This is neither intentional nor malicious but is, I prefer to think, an oversight brought about because libraries are so ingrained in our thinking that, like a comfortable pair of slippers, we forget how important they are. Hopefully, this paper has returned the library from your subconscious to your conscious. The suggestions proffered are based upon the author's experiences as a librarian and as an academic department chairperson. The intent has been to aid fellow chairpersons in developing adequate library resources and to suggest ways of motivating departments to become aware of and to effectively utilize library resources.

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